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University of Oxford

DEPARTMENT OF EXPERIMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

SOUTH PARKS ROAD · OXFORD · OX1 3UD Telephone 56789 Ext.403

CONTEMPORARY VIOLENCE RESEARCH CENTRE

RESEARCH DIRECTORS: PETER MARSH, Dip.Soc.Stud., M.A.
ANNE CAMPBELL, B.Sc., D.Phil.

RESEARCH ASSOCIATES: JOHN MCLEOD, B.Sc.
JANE BAILEY, B.Sc.

JM/DMS

20th April 1978

John MacBeath Esq.,
Department of Education,
Jordanhill College of Education,
Southrae Drive,
Glasgow.

Dear John,

A short note only. I felt good about our talk yesterday and I have gone ahead and written to various people in Barrowfield, see attached copies of letters. By the way, they were sent on plain notepaper, not "Violence Centre" paper.

The date of the Conference is now 8th September not the 15th September.

See you soon.

Yours sincerely,

John

John

Enc.

c.c. Mr. JOHN McBEATH

JM/DMS

19th April 1978

John Miller, Esq.,
191 Stamford Street,
Barrowfield,
Glasgow.

Dear Mr. Miller,

You may remember we met in January whilst I was helping out at the Free School and we talked a little about some of the things I was interested in concerning Barrowfield - fighting and so on. However, I do not think I went into any detail about what it is that I am doing.

I am in fact working on a project based here in Oxford which aims to compare the kinds of experiences kids have growing up in various communities throughout Britain. Some of my colleagues are working areas of London, Birmingham and villages near Oxford. We hope, eventually, to be able to make positive suggestions as to how some of the problems of youth which feature so prominently in the papers - vandalism, getting into trouble and so on - might best be handled by parents, teachers and other interested parties.

I would like to come back to Barrowfield in order to find out more about what it is like for kids to grow up there, but before I did that I need to know whether this would have the support of community leaders such as yourself. The kind of research I would like to do would be to talk to both kids and adults in Barrowfield about what there is for young people to do, and their opinions about the available facilities, the alternatives they might prefer, and things like that. I would hope that the kids might become involved with this project and help with the interviewing - I have talked to John MacBeath about this and it might be something which the school could help with, depending on what the other teachers have to say on the matter.

I want to put it on record that I have no intention of producing any kind of sensationalised or over-dramatised report on the East End such as appears from time to time in the newspapers or on television. My colleagues and I are interested in an accurate, sober assessment of both the positive and negative sides of the East End, and this is why we need the co-operation of community leaders.

Cont...

Sheet 2

Anyway, I would very much appreciate it if you would think about this and maybe discuss it with other people in Barrowfield who you might think would be interested. If you would like any more information or have any questions about this project, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

I will be in Glasgow again probably at the end of May - could we meet to talk about this then?

Yours sincerely,

John

John McLeod

c.c Mr J. McBeath

JM/DMS

19th April 1978

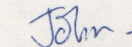
Rev. Eric Cramm,
St. Thomas Church,
Church of Scotland,
Gallowgate,
Glasgow.

Dear Rev. Cramm,

I am working on a project, based here in Oxford, which aims to investigate aspects of youth culture and activities in different communities throughout Britain. We are eager to include the East End of Glasgow in this research, and I have tentatively identified Barrowfield as a promising locale. John MacBeath of Jordanhill College, who has been working with me on this, suggested that you would be an invaluable source of information concerning life in Barrowfield.

I shall probably be in Glasgow again towards the end of May - could we meet to talk about this then? Apart from being interested in your views on "growing up in Barrowfield", I would like to hear your views on the desirability or feasibility of doing this kind of work in your area. We do not intend to do any extensive research work (which would involve getting a flat in the area and living there for a while) without first enlisting the support of community leaders. We have no wish to produce a sensationalised account along the lines of "Glasgow Gang Observed" but instead wish to co-operate with people in the area to give them the opportunity to state both the positive as well as negative sides of life in the East End. Thus, I would appreciate it if you would think about whether you could give such a project your support.

Yours sincerely,


John McLeod

c.c. Mr. John MacBeath

JM/DMS

19th April 1978

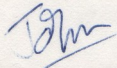
Mrs. Margaret Vass,
Housing Management Department,
Glasgow District Council,
Clive House,
India Street,
Glasgow.

Dear Mrs. Vass,

A research project has been set up here in Oxford which will be concerned with investigating aspects of youth culture and activities in different communities throughout Britain. We are eager to include the East end of Glasgow in this project, and I have been working closely with Mr. John MacBeath of Jordanhill College of Education and Barrowfield Free School to that end.

I have approached various people in the area, and with Mr. MacBeath's help I believe that there is a substantial degree of support in Barrowfield for our work. An important facility in this kind of research is to have a base in the community, and we were hoping to rent a flat in Barrowfield during our stay there. I would appreciate your advice on the best way to go about applying for a flat for this purpose.

Yours sincerely,



John McLeod

c.c. Mr John MacBeath

JM/DMS

19th April 1978

Mrs. Martha Carmichael,
29 Yate Street.
Barrowfield.
Glasgow.

Dear Mrs. Carmichael.

We met in January while I was helping out at the Free School during the time Joe was ill and the heating had disappeared. I do not think we ever talked about why I was in Barrowfield, although I discussed it with some of the kids.

I am in fact working on a project based here in Oxford which aims to compare the kinds of experiences kids have growing up in various communities throughout Britain. Some of my colleagues are working areas of London, Birmingham and villages near Oxford. We hope, eventually, to be able to make positive suggestions as to how some of the problems of youth which feature so prominently in the papers - vandalism, getting into trouble and so on - might best be handled by parents, teachers and other interested parties.

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Yours sincerely,

John

John McLeod

Towards a radical reform of education

Jack Goody

Universal education has failed both society and individuals in a number of ways. Could we bring hand and brain closer together, and stop training clerks?

From their very beginning in Sumerian times, schools have been in the business of training individuals for literate tasks. A limited percentage of the population would be trained for the clerical professions. Most other kinds of work were learned on the job. But writing, though it bestowed prestige from the very outset, was not considered essential to earthly success. It was perfectly possible to be a king or warrior without knowing how to read or write. If you needed a scribe, you hired one.

Come the industrialised democracies of the 19th century, however, compulsory—that is, school—education, became the counterpart of universal suffrage. Universal education, bound to produce a high literacy rate, was seen as essential to economic development. But school for everybody means school values for everybody. Training in literate procedures also meant a training away from activities which do not demand much by way of formal literate education. So the manpower for basic jobs that the community has to have done—be it brick-laying, garbage collection, or working down the mines—can only be recruited from those who are “unsuccessful” in school terms.

One may be able to get round the problem of school “success” by introducing better teaching methods. But this doesn’t, to my mind, get round the basic problem, which is that schooling, however satisfactory to the individual, is in some measure detrimental to society as a whole if it makes us despise such jobs—which in many developing countries include even farming, the basic productive process itself.

If we accept the intrinsic link of “school” with “literacy,” we have to be sceptical about what can be achieved within the framework of the school. The main problem lies elsewhere, in the universalisation of literate education that was accepted as part and parcel of the democratic state—symbol of a goal that all liberal and right-minded people want to promote, maximisation of opportunities.

When schools were training only a proportion of the population, while the rest, either by force or preference, chose other tasks, the objectives of training in schools and universities were straightforward. The aim was to train clerks, administrators and scholars, literate specialists of all kinds. Not even the introduction of compulsory education changed the school system in any basic way.

In England, some 70 years later, an attempt was made in the Education Act, 1944, to institutionalise a secondary-level non-academic school, the so-called “secondary modern.” The attempt failed, mainly because both parents and teachers believed the values of an academic education to be superior to any other. More recent changes towards comprehensive education have meant that the secondary level was homogenised—to give everyone, as it were, the opportunity of becoming a clerk or a teacher. Apprenticeship, meanwhile,

was increasingly brought within the formal system of schools, colleges and universities.

It can be argued that if everyone has to be educated in schools, we can easily diversify rather than homogenise the curricula. This, I believe, should and must be done, and I am not alone in this belief. Brave efforts have been made, especially in developing countries, to change the situation, by, say, introducing agriculture into the curriculum. Developing countries, where as many as 80 or 90 per cent of the population are involved in agriculture, are in much greater difficulty with a type of universal “education” that effectively devalues villagers as rustic, and agriculture as a non-literate occupation, than advanced societies that require only 10 or 20 per cent of people in these and similar jobs.

The situation has been described with particular insight and clarity by Julius Nyerere, President of Tanzania in his 1967 policy statement, *Education for Self-Reliance*. Arguing that an educational budget that consumes 20 per cent of the government’s revenue is excessive, especially in view of the results, he proposed instead the integration of schooling and farming communities, which would not only produce what they need but also educate in doing so. He also proposed to postpone the age of entry to primary school—the only school most children will attend—and had plans for a radical transformation of the curriculum.

But can such a transformation take place within the already well-established school context? The President’s remarks prompted a report from the Institute of Education on *The Re-introduction of Agriculture in the Primary School Curriculum*: a document from the Ministry of Education concerning projects for “school-farms” and a report suggesting that craftsmen such as village tailors be employed as “temporary teachers.” This is how such ideas are perceived by the educational hierarchy of scribes and administrators, on whom the state perforce relies for the introduction of radical new plans.

Cuba is another country that has attempted radical educational reform. Let me quote the account of one sympathetic observer: “Existing buildings were converted and new schools built at a furious rate. Children were brought from particularly remote areas to boarding schools in Havana.” But the result of this intense activity was to place more children in the atmosphere of a “very traditional” pedagogy. As far as the rapidly expanding adult sector was concerned, “literacy was ‘shotgunned,’ irrespective of pupils’ ages or economic role.” Technology students were provided with such excellent workshops that even this observer wondered “if at least a part of it could not be more economically used in an actual production centre.”

More recent developments have led the schools

Jack Goody is Professor of Social Anthropology, University of Cambridge

take some steps towards closer contact with the productive system, at least in the countryside. Nowadays nearly all secondary school children move there for six to ten weeks a year, spending half the day on farm work. But the schools remain very much schools. Here as elsewhere, signs of real integration into the environment are few.

Part of the problem can be put down to the traditional role of teacher and school; part to the overvaluation of literate occupations by society as a whole. School "gardens," meant to be a link between school and the wider society, are often looked after as a chore by a duty master. As a result, they are frequently more a warning than an encouragement to those who may wish to take up farming. And it is characteristic that they should be presented as "gardening," rather than as the production of vital root or cereal crops.

But are we any more realistic, in our own society, when instruction in "productive" activities is transferred to the classroom? This either takes the form of "craft"—ie, the practice of activities which, whatever their virtues, have little or no connection with mainstream social processes. Or it takes the form of reducing technical processes like wood and metal work to the level of hobbies.

There would be nothing wrong with this trend if it supplemented other activities, more directly related to the upkeep of the community. But what it frequently accompanies is an active denigration of other activities. Working as an educational administrator in Hertfordshire some years ago, I was surprised at the ferocity displayed by school teachers, and by administrators too, against the custom of allowing children a week's "holiday" for potato picking. While such a break could have had little effect on any kind of academic activity and clearly made a useful contribution to the local economy, the custom evoked something close to moral condemnation among teachers.

Such disapproval is not only common in other parts of the world, wherever teachers see a threat to their "control" of the children's time, either from parents or from the world in general. It is almost as old as schools themselves. An Egyptian papyrus dating from about 2000bc compares the sad lot of a dyer with that of a scribe: "his hands stink, they have the odour of rotten fish, and he abhorreth the sight of all cloth."

The inevitable result of the overvaluation of academic activity is the undervaluation of other occupations that involve different and usually more practical skills. I see no way in which this inequality can be remedied within the school curriculum. The last way of achieving success is to let teachers get hold of practical activity and bring it into the "de-contextualised" atmosphere of the school.

One alternative might be to link the upbringing of our children more closely with productive and cultural activities. I don't mean that "mock-ups" of those activities should be brought into the school—rather that children should be allowed to participate, from an early age, in what is really taking place around them. If this could be done for half a child's present school time—perhaps two and a half days a week—there would be a balance between school and non-school activities which would provide scope for the expression of diversified talents and make for less restrictive evaluations. Some would succeed in certain activities, others in different ones. Even those who wished to pursue the academic stream would have some experience of, and possibly more respect for, other types of

activities. The children of doctors and lawyers, of teachers and office-workers, would get to know at first hand about alternative types of employment.

A programme of this sort would involve great changes in social life. It would also involve a considerable amount of organisation and a lot of thought about the appropriate activity contexts for children of different ages. But when one thinks about it, learning by participation on the job was the customary practice in all societies until the industrial revolution. It was only in Victorian England, where the unregulated employment of working class children in the new and savage environment of the factory led to legislative action, that an ideology developed that regarded the separation of children from "work" and their enclosure in the classroom, under teacher control, as the central aim of education.

If teachers were to be relieved of their charges for half the week, they could then give better attention, through smaller classes, to the rest. But manpower would also be needed to staff the important new role of work-organiser—responsible, along with parents, for arranging how children would work and learn in a variety of situations. Some would be engaged in craft activities, or farm work, or assisting in factory and service contexts. Some would help the aged and deprived, or take on environmental improvement activities.

The partial de-schooling of the younger members of society would have several additional advantages. At the level of craft and artistic activity, for example, the children would learn in the studio or the potter's shop, rather than from some painter or potter who has been dragged into the alien environment of the school. The new solution would actually help to support independent craftsmen. There might be some loss of "efficient" teaching, but there would be gains in other ways.

It might be argued that the presence of children would reduce the "efficiency" of the productive system. This might be true in the short term—but even if they made no direct contribution, their very presence on the shopfloor would increase social benefits in a variety of ways. For them it would change their experience and evaluation of jobs, and might possibly alter patterns of occupational recruitment. Secondly, it could "humanise" the atmosphere of the factory or other enterprise, in a manner that could reduce the "alienation" of workers in certain spheres. Anything that can decrease the segregation of occupation from other institutions, like family and school, is seen as important in improving "industrial relations" in socialist and capitalist systems alike.

As a corollary of any process of de-schooling, students would have to be able, if they so wished, to continue later and to finish earlier. But success would also depend upon a further major change in the sphere of social organisation—namely, the revaluation of occupational roles. One way of effecting such a change is increasingly being adopted both in socialist and capitalist countries. This is basically a system of inverse incomes, whereby people are paid more depending on the unattractiveness of their job. The academic stream, for example, is paid less than the productive stream, the rabbi less than the shoemaker. Indeed, the industrial system can be seen to be moving involuntarily towards this end, either as a result of state planning or by trade union action.

However, there is yet a further element that has to be introduced if we are to avoid a situation where people are "condemned" to one occupation

R. J. Forbes, "Chemical, culinary and cosmetic arts," in C. Singer, E. J. Holmyard and A. R. Hall (eds), *A History of Technology* (Oxford University Press, 1954)

A. Gillette, *Cuba's Educational Revolution* (Fabian pamphlet, 1972)

M. McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, (Toronto University Press, 1962)

O. Neugebauer, *The Exact Sciences in Antiquity* (Brown University Press, 1957)

W. J. Ong, *Rhetoric, Romance and Technology* (Ithaca, 1971)

W. D. Rohwer Jr, "Prime time for education: early childhood or adolescence?" (*Harvard Educational Review*, No. 41, 1971)

N. V. Zanolli, *Education Toward Development in Tanzania* (Basel University Press, 1971)

all their lives. This further reform would really open up the educational system, as well as changing the valuation of jobs, changing motivation and satisfaction, and extending the span of educational activity over the total life-span. It is what one might call the Chinese or kibbutz solution. In essence, it involves the maximal rotation of jobs, of continuing turn over of occupational activity.

In order to be effective, this solution should not be of the "emergency" or even "re-educative" kind—that, say, despatches university students or professors to work in the fields to bring in the harvest (as with the military solution to the sugar harvest in Ghana in 1972). Nor can it be of the "voluntaristic" kind that is possible in a tightly organised small-scale society like a kibbutz. It has to be more radically rotational, involving the sacrifice of short-term efficiency for the sake of longer-term goals.

A limited form of rotation could be arranged within organisations or even within sectors of society. Members of a factory could rotate through various jobs, with the more trained taking on a share of less skilled tasks to give others the chance of receiving further training and experience. University professors, for example, could teach in colleges or secondary schools for one year in every five or seven. Naturally the extent of rotation would have to be governed by logistic problems, but many of these are not so insurmountable as they seem. More than one corporal has turned out to be a good general, given the opportunity.

A second alternative is to have a period of

"national service" during which individuals would be assigned to less valued but necessary tasks, like garbage collection or manual work in the building industry, possibly as a condition of their receiving further training.

Finally, there is the more far-reaching alternative that would ask university teachers and industrial managers to spend a period of years in quite a different occupation—not only so that they could contribute in a different way to the national economy and to the revaluation of essential tasks, but also so that more people could hold top jobs.

Universal schooling really has failed in a number of significant ways, not only for individuals but for society itself. An individual, I suspect, could be better educated by participating during significant parts of his childhood and adolescence in productive and cultural activities outside the school context. Such a programme would at once involve the more active participation of the community in education; and of people in production. It would also imply that children would move different types of practical experience, and that a longer period of formal education would be possible for those who desired it—and, perhaps more important—when they desired it. The university or technical college student of advanced years should become a much more common phenomenon.

Education on the job, rotation of functions, and so on, have been regularly practised by other societies. The school and occupation system we know are man-made creations which do not represent the only possibilities for social organisation.

